# Tips on Time Management

Successful time management requires you to understand where your time goes, reclaim more of it for your studies, and make optimum use of your study time. There are various techniques to help you achieve this:

## Take control of your time

## Planners: use a [time planner](https://student.kent.ac.uk/studies/time-management#time-planners) (also available free from the Skills for Academic Success reception), student diary or online calendar to record your personal, professional and university commitments, including your assignment deadlines and exam dates, and the times and locations of your lectures, seminars and other academic activities. Make sure that you keep it up to date and place it above your workspace to help you keep an overview of your workload and plan your time accordingly. Alternatively, as time plans rarely remain constant, you could use one of the project management tools such as a Gantt chart. This is easy to create in Excel.

**Prioritise:** with so much to do, you will need to prioritise some tasks or commitments over others. Keep an ongoing ‘to do list’ which indicates which tasks are both important and urgent (for example, completing and submitting an essay by the following day) and those which are important but can be tackled afterwards. Revise your list daily, crossing off completed tasks and adding new ones.

**Work pattern:** find a routine that works for you. If you work best in the mornings, use your most productive time for more demanding study-related tasks, and your less productive time for mundane tasks such as sorting, tidying or doing housework. Make sure that your study schedule includes breaks and some sort of physical exercise, even if it is only a 15-minute walk around campus. Both give your brain a chance to relax and re-energise.

**Learn to say ‘No’:** ensure that those around you - family, friends and colleagues – respect your right to opt out of things that will interfere with your study time. Try also to say ‘no’ to time-stealing activities such as television, gaming and the internet/social media.

**Focus on specific tasks:** break academic tasks down into manageable chunks. Each study session – an hour, two hours, a morning, plotted carefully on a weekly planner – should have a clear, achievable target. This may be to complete a practice paper in readiness for an exam or make notes on a key chapter in a book. Either way, fulfilling each specific task within a set timeframe will provide an ongoing sense of achievement and move you efficiently, step-by-step towards your overall goal. Try the university’s online [Assignment Survival Tool Kit (ASK)](https://student.kent.ac.uk/studies/written-assignments/assignment-survival-kit) to plan and complete different stages of your assignments. If you experience any difficulties using this tool, please email sas@kent.ac.uk.

**Use downtime:** make good use of the ‘in between’ times, e.g. travelling or waiting times. Carry some material around with you and use this time to go over notes, read or jot down ideas. During gaps between lectures, use the time to check out or return books at the library or even to do some research.

## Save yourself time

**Files and folders:** invest in the stationery you need to organise your work - whether by module, topic or assignment – so that you can quickly find what you need, when you need it. Time wasted searching for things (perhaps several days accumulated over the course of a year) can be spent more productively instead**.**

**Asking for help:** don’t spend time floundering. There is a lot of help available at the university. If you can’t locate sources in the library, ask the library assistants or the relevant subject library resource guide. If you can’t get to grips with an assignment, ask the seminar leader or make an [appointment](https://student.kent.ac.uk/studies/skills-for-academic-success#appointments) with a Skills for Academic Success learning adviser. If anxiety is holding you up, you might want to visit the Counselling Service.

**Effective reading:** focus your reading on what is most relevant and useful, by surveying, skimming and scanning written material, before reading only carefully selected passages in detail. See the ‘Effective reading’ study guide for more details.

**Effective note-making:** as you read and take notes, make sure you record the full reference details (author, date, title of publication etc.) of the source you are examining (book, journal, website, etc.) as you go along. This will ensure that you do not waste time later trying to relocate the source material in order to compile your reference list. To save time deciphering your notes when you come to use them, make sure that they are clear and easy to understand. See the ‘Effective note making’ study guide for more details.

**Plan before you write:** plan what you are going to write before you begin. This may save several hours of rethinking, restructuring and rewriting later on. For guidance on planning your writing, either book an appointment, attend one of our ‘skills development’ workshops, or watch our SkillBuilder videos on ‘Managing your essay and ‘Structuring your essay’.

**In short, be organised.**

Scan the QR code to book appointments, view our events calendar, watch skills videos and more…

